



STAY ALERT. STAY ALIVE. HURRICANE AWARENESS

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
HURRICANE INFORMATION

Health Department Warns of Risks Before the Storm

Hurricane readiness should begin before the event occurs. The Mississippi Department of Health (MDH) advises residents to prepare before the storm, so lives can be saved and illness prevented.

Prepare for a Weather Emergency

- Identify potential home hazards that could develop during a hurricane, such as those involving gas, electricity, chemicals and structural damage.
- Provide escape ladders for multi-story structures.
- Establish an assembly point where family members will meet.
- Give your relatives and friends the name of a contact person who will know where you are and how you are doing.
- Show family members how to shut off the gas, water and electric mains.
- Have copies of your important papers in a safe location.
- Inform local authorities of any special needs: for example, elderly or bedridden people or anyone with a disability.

Food safety: Preventing Food-Borne Diseases

- Throw away all food including fruits, vegetables and other produce if it comes in contact with flood water or tidal surges.
- Throw away all screw cap or crimp cap containers if they become submerged.
- Discard any cold or cool food that has warmed. Food that is still frozen or cold (45 degrees Fahrenheit or less) is safe to prepare.
- Commercially prepared cans of food should not be eaten if there is a bulge or opening on the can.
- Cans with screw caps, soda pop bottle tops, pop-tops or twist-caps cannot be disinfected and should be discarded.
- Undamaged, commercially canned foods can be used if you remove the labels and then disinfect the cans in a bleach solution. Use one fourth cup of bleach in one gallon of water; re-label the cans including expiration date and type of food. Assume that home-canned food is unsafe.
- Infants should be fed only canned baby formula. Do not use powdered formulas prepared with treated water. Use boiled water when preparing formula. Breastfeeding protects babies from the risks of a contaminated water supply. It provides protection against respiratory illnesses and diarrhea.
- The basics of breastfeeding during an emergency are much the same as they are in normal times. Continuing to breastfeed whenever the baby seems hungry maintains a mother's milk supply and provides familiar comfort. The release of hormones while a mother is breastfeeding relieves stress and anxiety and is calming to both mother and baby.

First Aid

First aid, even for minor cuts and burns, is extremely important if exposure to waters potentially contaminated with human, animal, or toxic wastes occurs. Immediately clean out all open wounds and cuts with soap and clean water. Most cuts, except minor scratches, sustained during flood cleanup activities will warrant treatment to prevent tetanus. If you are injured, contact a physician or clinic to determine the necessary type of treatment.

A tetanus shot should be administered every 10 years, but if a patient can not recall the date of the last shot, another tetanus shot can and should be administered.

Sanitation and Hygiene: Preventing Waterborne Illness

Contamination levels, if any, vary among water systems. If your area is officially notified that emergency water purification is necessary, the MDH advises the following:

- Vigorously boil water for at least a full minute before using.
- Disinfect by adding unscented chlorine bleach in these amounts: two drops of bleach for each quart of clear water or four drops of bleach for each quart of muddy or dirty water. Let the water stand at least 30 minutes before using.
- Basic hygiene is very important during this emergency period. Always wash your hands with soap and water that has been boiled or disinfected before eating, after toilet use, after participating in cleanup activities and after handling articles contaminated by floodwater or sewage.
- Flooding that occurs after the hurricane may mean that water contains contaminants from sewage systems, agricultural and industrial waste and septic tanks. If you have open cuts or sores exposed to the floodwater, keep them as clean as possible by washing them with soap and clean water. Apply antibiotic ointment to reduce the risk of infection. If a wound or sore develops redness, swelling or drainage, see a physician or consult clinic staff.
- Do not allow children to play in floodwater. They can be exposed to water contaminated with fecal matter. Do not allow children to play with toys that have been in floodwater until the toys have been disinfected. Disinfect with one fourth cup of bleach in one gallon of water.

Power Outages: Preventing Fire Hazards

- Use battery-powered lanterns and flashlights instead of candles.
- If you must use candles, make sure you put them in safe holders away from curtains, paper, wood, or other flammable items.

Clearing Standing Water: Preventing Mosquito-Borne Illness

Heavy rains and flooding can lead to an increase in mosquitoes. Mosquitoes are most active at sunrise and sunset. Public health authorities will be working actively to control the spread of any diseases transmitted by mosquitoes.

- To protect against mosquitoes, MDH urges the public to remain diligent in their personal mosquito protection efforts. These should include the 4 D's for prevention:
 - Dusk and Dawn — Avoid being outdoors when mosquitoes are seeking blood, usually the dusk and dawn hours.
 - Dress — Wear long pants and sleeves to keep exposed skin covered.
 - DEET — Repellents containing DEET, picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus are recommended for use on human skin. Always read the manufacturer's directions carefully before you put on a repellent.
 - Drainage — Check your home to rid it of standing water in which mosquitoes can lay their eggs.

For more information on hurricane preparedness, visit the MDH website at www.HealthyMS.com or contact the Mississippi Department of Health toll-free 24 hours a day, seven days a week at 1-866-HLTHY4U (1-866-458-4948).